

Let Brotherly Love Continue
Louis Garbi

When a soul is first converted, he or she is filled with thanksgiving. There is appreciation for the mercy shown by God. Loving God takes on new meaning. In conjunction with this, there is gladness and appreciation for brothers and sisters in Christ. Glory to God — there are others who share the beauty of redemption! Thus, brotherly love is contained in a newfound love for God, and so it must continue in our lives. It has high value. It is similar to a marriage in this way; it begins with great joy and is maintained through loving sacrifice. *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Romans 12:10).*

Jesus said,

“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:30-31).

Love extends beyond the fellowship of believers. Jesus cited loving neighbors as ourselves as the second of the two greatest commandments. Note our Lord’s emphasis: *“There is no other commandment greater than these.”* Whether toward brethren or our neighbors in the world, love must be the focus of our lives in Christ. It is the direction Jesus followed while on this earth.

Love does not always mean agreement or approval. It does not always mean we are happy with ourselves, our neighbors, or our brethren. Loving God often requires avoiding things we might be inclined to do. It also means weighing the suggestions and practices of others by using the scriptures to discern God’s will. This is not to say that our life in Christ is a life of being critical and judgmental. That would be a wretched thing indeed! With apologies for mangling **Ephesians 6:16**, it would be like having our feet shod with the preparation the gospel of war. While the love of Christ avoids wrong, it also maintains the good will of God in the face of wrong.

The good will of our Lord includes, *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18).* The Lord does understand difficult situations, hence, *“if it is possible.”* However, *“if it is possible”* is not a justification for not getting along with others. The main message is to live peaceably with all men. It is a primary practice of love. *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).*

Can we address problems we may see in others? Jesus taught us, *“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him” (Luke 17:3).* Again we have it written, *“Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14).* Yes, we can rebuke and admonish. However, if the spirit of reconciliation is not there, it is all in vain.

Concerning our address to the world, it is written,

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light (Ephesians 5:11-13).

To expose evil is to provide a contrast, otherwise it is so much noise. We dare not be like those who declare the wickedness of pornography, all the while pointing to the pictures. On the contrary, we must provide an example of the mercy God has bestowed on us.

At times it feels difficult to practice love in a troubled world. We see things disturbing on the right and left of politics. We see souls adrift in atheism or a vague notion of God. So? We must answer to our Lord.

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:25-28).

Our world around us is shaking. We are called to stand upon that which cannot be shaken. Therefore –

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain (Philippians 2:14-16).

So wrote the man who endured beatings, imprisonment, and all manner of troubles from a world of opposition.

Brotherly love and loving our neighbor as ourselves seem close, almost the same. There is a distinction, in that brotherly love is a direct result of salvation. It comes from our being a part of God's family, "*the Beloved*" (Ephesians 1:6). We have a shared identity and appreciation. Whereas loving our neighbor is the ministry of Christ to a world in need: "*Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law*" (Romans 13:10). For the sake of all, love means appreciating others for the goodness they possess, or the potential for goodness which everyone has. It means trying to understand others – to see their point of view, then to act accordingly. We must leave the condemnation of others to God. It is not our place. In light of the ministry of Jesus, we can say that even Jesus sustains the hope of reconciliation to all without condemnation. Don't you think His intent was on what we could become (our potential) rather than what we were? Didn't that make our salvation possible? "*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*" (John 3:17). "*And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world*" (John 12:47).

When the scripture says, "*Let brotherly love continue,*" there is a need to keep the focus clear. When we came out of the water of baptism, love was the spiritual condition we emerged in, the new scene. As we continue, we must be conscientious about such things in order to stay alive in Christ.